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Smokers encouraged to kick their habit

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Volunteers are encouraging area residents to quit smoking cold turkey today in honor of Kick Butts Day.

Those who wish to kick their habit can exchange their tobacco products for a free turkey lunch.

"The message is just (to) go cold turkey for one day and think about quitting ... and just encouraging loved ones to think about quitting," said Candida Manion, Communities of Excellence tobacco program coordinator.

The event is hosted by Cleveland County Turning Point and is part of the Communities of Excellence tobacco control program, she said.

Volunteers will give out the meals 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the eastside Wal-Mart in Norman, Super Wal-Mart off Interstate-35 in Moore and Super C grocery store in Noble, Manion said.

The meal will consist of a turkey sandwich, chips and a soda, along with informational material on quitting smoking.

Volunteers will accept any tobacco-related products for exchange, including cigarettes, spit tobacco tins, pipes, lighters and matches.

Area high school students also will be celebrate Kick Butts Day by giving out information about the dangers of smoking at their school.

Kendahl Jackson, a 10th-grader at Norman High School, is president of the Students Working Against Tobacco chapter at her school.

Her organization is setting up a booth on campus at lunch today. Members will hand out information on the dangers of smoking, focusing on their "16" campaign.

"Sixteen people die each day from tobacco-related diseases in Oklahoma," she said.

SWAT hosts the event around the country, getting the message into high schools that smoking is unhealthy.

Jackson said this is an important message for teenagers because many don't take the danger of smoking seriously.

"To high school students, the whole 'Don't do tobacco' (message) is kind of a useless message, it seems," she said.

SWAT helps students understand the dangers of smoking and move past their natural apathy, Jackson said.

Julianna Parker

366-3550

jparker@normantranscript